



**Old Persian *fraša* and *vašna* :  
Two terms at the Intersection of Religious  
and Imperial Discourse\***

Among the most common, and most discussed formulae in Achaemenian royal inscriptions is the phrase *vašnā auramazdāha* “by the Wise Lord’s will”<sup>1</sup> (Akkadian *i-na šilli šá ʿú-ri-mi-iz-da*, Elamite *za-u-mi-in ʿU-ra-mas-da-na*, Aramaic *bḥl zy ḥwrmzd*).<sup>2</sup> It recurs

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<sup>1</sup> The generally accepted etymology takes *\*vašna-* to be a nominal derivative in *-no-* from the Indo-European verb *\*wek-* “to will, to wish” (Avestan *vas-*, Sanskrit *vaś-*; cf. Old Persian *vasi-y* (adv.) “at will, greatly.” For details, see Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern, Franke Verlag 1959), p. 1135 or Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* (Heidelberg, Carl Winter 1956–76) 3, p. 170. Other analyses have been advanced by Oswald Szemerényi, *Iranica* V, in: *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg* (Leiden, E. J. Brill 1975), pp. 325–343, and Wojciech Skalmowski, *Old Persian *az-raka-**, in: *A Green Leaf: Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen* (Leiden, E. J. Brill 1988), pp. 39–42.

<sup>2</sup> The terms in all four languages do not correspond precisely, suggesting that scribes had some difficulty locating parallels for the Iranian term within the extant ideology and vocabulary of these other languages. Thus, for instance, Akkadian *šillu* (also written ideographically as GIŠ.MI) means, most literally “shadow, shade of a tree, shaded place.” By extension, it came to denote the instruments through which shade is created (“awning, covering”), and by further extension still “protection, aegis, patronage” (i.e. the capacity to create comfort and security in a potentially difficult world). In this last sense, it is often used to denote the support a deity affords to a king, as when Gilgamesh asks the god *Šamaš* to bestow his “protection” on him (*ši-il-[I]am šuku[n elija]*) or when Esarhaddon represents himself as the person “to whom (the great gods) have extended their lasting protection, in order to calm their divine hearts” (*ša ... ana nuḥḥi ḥibbi ilū tišūnu ... GIŠ.MI-šū-nu dāri itrušu elišu*). See A. Leo Oppenheim, et al., *Assyrian Dictionary* (Chicago, Oriental Institute, 1956–) 16, p. 189–192. Elamite *za-u-mi-in* is translated “exertion, effort” (“*Mühewaltung*”) by Walther Hinz and Hildemarie Koch, *Elamisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin, Dietrich Reimer 1987), p. 1286, consistent with the rendering of *adam hamataxšaiy* (“I exerted myself”) by *za-um* (DB 1.68. Elamite thus signals a more active work of intervention on the Wise Lord’s part, while the semantic range of the Aramaic is similar to that of the Akkadian.

throughout the extant corpus, but it is Darius (from whom most of our inscriptions derive) who uses it most often: 36 times at Bisitun, and 23 times elsewhere, for 75% of all occurrences. Of his successors, only Xerxes uses this formula with any frequency (13 times, 17%), and it shows up a total of 8 times (10%) in the inscriptions of all others, ranging from Ariaramnes to Artaxerxes II (the last of whom accounts for half of these). Scholars have rightly stressed the way it was used to legitimate Achaemenian rule in general,<sup>3</sup> and along these lines, it must be regarded as one of the more ideologically significant and historically consequential phrases in the history of diction. Most specifically and most critically, through the repeated and emphatic deployment of this phrase, Darius was able to redefine the extraordinarily suspicious events of his ascension to the throne as nothing less than divine election and the acting out of God's will in history.<sup>4</sup>

Closer investigation of the ways in which Darius and his successors used this formula yields a more nuanced understanding of the semantics and pragmatics of Achaemenian propaganda. Toward this end, in the first section of this paper I will examine the verbs that occur in connection with the formula, in order to ascertain what precise actions the Achaemenians sought to authorize by invocation of "the Wise Lord's will." In the second section, I turn to the uses of an Avestan cognate (*vasna-*) that has received surprisingly scant attention. I then pursue some lines opened up by these investigations to explore the significance of a term in Old Persian (*fraša-*) that has been much less well understood than its Avestan cognate.

<sup>3</sup> See, inter alia, Gregor Ahn, *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im achämenidischen Iran* (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1992), pp. 3, 88, 196–199, et passim; Peter Frei and Klaus Koch, *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1984), p. 65; Gherardo Gnoli, *Politique religieuse et conception de la royauté sous les Achéménides*, in: *Commémoration Cyrus: Hommage Universel* (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1974), pp. 164–165.

<sup>4</sup> Within a large literature on Darius's accession and the events of 523–522 B.C.E., see M.A. Dandamaev, *Persien unter den ersten Achämeniden* (Wiesbaden, Ludwig Reichert 1976); E.J. Bickerman and H. Tadmor, *Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis, and the Magi*, *Athenaeum* 56 (1978), pp. 239–261, and Clarisse Herrenschildt, *Les historiens de l'empire Achéménide et l'inscription de Bisotun*, *Annales Économies Sociétés Civilisations* 37 (1982), pp. 813–823.

## I

With a few exceptions,<sup>5</sup> all those things that are marked as having taken place "by the Wise Lord's will" (*vašnā Auramazdāha*) fall within four broad verbal categories: a) verbs of being and becoming; b) verbs of having and getting; c) verbs of violence and destruction; and d) verbs of doing and making. In each instance, details of usage are revealing.

a) *Verbs of being and becoming*

The verb *bav-* "to become," always appears in the first person singular imperfect and has one specific complement when it is used with the formula. The speaker thus narrates a critical moment in his own becoming: The moment he assumed the office and identity that, inter alia, empowered him to tell his story in the fashion that best served his purposes: "By the Wise Lord's will, I became king" (*vašnā Auramazdāha adam xšāyaθiya abavam*, DB 1.59–60, XPf 34–35; cf. DB 4.4–5, DSm 5–6).<sup>6</sup>

The formula is particularly useful for one who has come to the throne in an irregular fashion. In order to legitimate his rule in conclusive fashion, the speaker displaces agency from the human realm and assigns it to the Wise Lord, reemphasizing this point in the surrounding narration.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for example, Darius describes the murder of his predecessor.

<sup>5</sup> All five exceptions occur in inscriptions of Darius. They are: two verbs of motion (*pari-ay-*, DB 1.23 and *vi-tar-*, DB 1.88), a verb of striving (*ham-taxš-*, DB 1.70), a verb of emotion (*tars-*, used in the negative, DPd 11–12), and a verb of seeming (*θa"da-*, DSj 6).

<sup>6</sup> All citations are taken from Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT, American Oriental Society 1953), with the exception of DSz as reconstructed by M.-J. Steve, "Inscriptions des Achéménides à Suse (suite)", *Studia Iranica* 3 (1974), p. 164. For the sake of consistency, I have retained Kent's orthography while incorporating modifications and corrections proposed by Rüdiger Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great: Old Persian Text* (London, School of Oriental and African Studies 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Often, the formulaic claim "by the Wise Lord's will, I became king" follows (or less often, precedes) a formula stating that the Wise Lord bestowed (*frābara* or *abara*) a gift on the king: help (*upastām*: DB 1.25–26), the realm (*xšačam*: DB 1.11–12, 1.24–26, 1.60–61; DPd 3–4, DSf 10–11, DSm 3, A<sup>2</sup>Hc 18), the land of Persia (*dahyāuš pārsā*: AmH 5–7 and AsH 9–10), or "this earth" (*imām būmim*

Says Darius the King ... No one dared to say anything about Gaumata the Magus until I arose. After that, I made supplication to the Wise Lord. The Wise Lord bore me help. Ten days of the month Bagayadi were past when I, with a few men, struck down that Gaumata the Magus and those people who were his foremost followers. A fortress named Sikayuvati, a land named Nisaya, in Media – there I slew him. I took the realm from him. **By the Wise Lord's will I became king.** The Wise Lord bestowed the realm on me. (DB 1.53–61).

*θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: ... kašciy naiy adaršnauš cišciy θastanaiy pariy Gaumātām tyam magum yātā adam ārsam. pasāva adam Auramaz(d)ām patiyāvahyaiy. Auramazdāmai y upastām abara. Bāgayādaiš māhya X raucabiš θakatā āha avaθā adam hadā kamnaibiš martiyaibiš avam gaumātām tyam magum avājanam, utā tyaišaiy frataim martiyā anušiyā āhatā. Sikayuvatiš nāmā didā Nisāya namā dahyāuš Mādaiy avadašim avajanam. xšačamšim adam adīnam. vašnā Auramazdāha adam xšāyaθiya abavam. Auramazdā xšačam manā frābara.*

And Xerxes, who was not the oldest of his father's sons, uses the same formula to describe how he came to rule in spite of the fact that he was junior to his half-brother Artabazanes. Although political calculation provided the primary motivation, within this account three levels of agency are interwoven: the Wise Lord's "desire" (*kāma*) that Darius should have many offspring, Darius's selection of Xerxes as crown prince, and the Wise Lord's "will" (*vašna*) that he become king. Human choice, set in second position, is thus encapsulated within and rendered subordinate to divine volition.<sup>8</sup>

DNa 31–35), a phrase that Clairisse Herrenschmidt reads as denoting the empire, "Désignation de l'empire et concepts politiques de Darius I<sup>er</sup> d'après ses inscriptions en vieux-perse", *Studia Iranica* 5 (1976), pp. 42–45.

<sup>8</sup> Hayim Tadmor has discussed this passage in connection with other materials from the Ancient Near East in which similar arguments were advanced to deal with the difficulties of similar situations, *Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature*, in: H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld, eds., *History, Historiography and Interpretation* (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1984), pp. 36–57. Darius's choice of Xerxes seems to have been predicated on the fact that his mother, Atossa, was the daughter of Cyrus the Great. In her son, the two lines of the Achaemenian family were thus

Says Xerxes the King: There were other sons of Darius, as was the Wise Lord's desire. Darius, my father, made me the greatest after himself. When my father Darius went before [God's] throne,<sup>9</sup> **by the Wise Lord's will I became king.** (XPf 27–35).

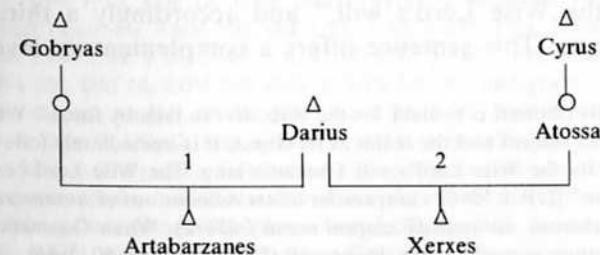
*θātiy Xšayāršā xšāyaθiya: Dārayavauš pučā aniyaiciy āhatā, Auramazdām avaθa kāma āha. Dārayavauš hya manā pitā pasā tanūm mām maθištām akunauš. yaθāmai y pitā Dārayavauš gāθavā ašiyava, vašnā Auramazdahā adam xšāyaθiya abavam.*

The formula is not used in connection with the phrase "I became king" or the verb "to become" by any other member of the dynasty. One other passage provides an instructive contrast, however, for it uses a verbal form in the third person to tell how someone other than the author of the text assumed royal power.

Says Darius the King: This realm that Gaumata the Magus took from Cambyses, this realm from ancient times was of our family. Then Gaumata the Magus took it from Cambyses. He appropriated Persia and Media and the other lands. He made them his own. **He became king.** (DB 1.43–48).

*θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: aita xšačam tya Gaumāta hya maguš adīnā Kabūjiyam, aita xšačam hacā paruviyata amāxam taumāyā āha. pasāva Gaumāta hya maguš adīnā Kabūjiyam utā pārsam utā mādam utā aniyā dahyāva hauv āyasatā. uvāipašiyam akutā. hauv xšāyaθiya abava.*

united, and all potential objections to Darius's usurpation thereby put to rest. The relevant family relations, described in Herodotus 7.2–3, were as follows:



<sup>9</sup> On the interpretation of this phrase, see Hans Schmeja, *Ging ein zum Throne der Götter*, in: *Monumentum Georg Morgenstierne*, Vol. 2 (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1982), pp. 185–188.



No mention is made of the Wise Lord's will, an omission that carries the clear implication that Gaumata's accession and reign ought therefore be judged illegitimate.<sup>10</sup> Darius thus redefines his predecessor as an unrighteous king, and his own act of usurpatory regicide as the restoration of rightful, divinely sanctioned rule.

Similarly, when used with the formula *vašnā Auramazdāha*, the verb "to be" (*ah-*) appears mostly in first person forms. Two of these occurrences are in the imperfect (DB 1.13–14, XPh 14–16), but most are in the present tense, and focus on the divine support that sustains the king/speaker in the present moment, rather than that through which he initially gained royal power. For the most part, these are simply statements to the effect that "By the Wise Lord's will, I am king" (*vašnā Auramazdāha adam xšāyaθiya amiy*), conjoined with the equally formulaic claim "the Wise Lord bestowed the realm on me" (*Auramazdā xšačam manā frābara*, DB 1.11–12, AmH 6–9, DNa 31–35, A<sup>2</sup>Hc 16–18).<sup>11</sup>

Twice, other verbal constructions appear. DPd opens without the standard formula "Says Darius the King" (*θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya*) and goes on to phrase the usual claims with an implied copula, making Darius the object, and not the speaker of the discourse.

The Wise Lord (is) great, the greatest of the gods! He made Darius king. He bestowed the realm on him. **By the Wise Lord's will, Darius is king.** (DPd 1–5).

*Auramazdā vazraka hya maθišta bagānām hauv Dārayavaum xšāyaθiyam adadā. haušaiy xšačam frābara. vašnā Auramazdāhā Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya.*

In one case only are actors other than the king said to "be" something "by the Wise Lord's will," and accordingly a third person plural appears. This sentence offers a complementary inversion of

<sup>10</sup> A similar distribution is evident for the verb *dī-* "to take by force." When Darius appears as its subject and the realm as its object, it is immediately followed by the assertion: "By the Wise Lord's will I became king. The Wise Lord bestowed the realm on me" (DB 1.59–61: *xšačamšim adam adīnam. vašnā auramazdāha adam xšāyaθiya abavam. auramazdā xšačam manā frābara*). When Gaumata is its subject, no mention is made of the divine will (DB 1.44–46, 1.50, 1.66).

<sup>11</sup> In one instance only is a different content conveyed, when Darius announces "By the Wise Lord's will, I am the sort of person who is a friend to what is right" (*vašnā Auramazdāhā avākaram amiy tyā rāstam dauštā amiy*, DNb 6–7).

the usual ideology, for just as Darius portrays his royal identity as the result of divine favor, so also does he claim that God's will has made all provinces and people in the empire his vassals (*ba<sup>n</sup>dakā*, literally his "bondsmen"), further specifying that they bear (*bar-*) tribute to him, just as the Wise Lord bears him support.<sup>12</sup>

Says Darius the King: These lands which came to me, **by the Wise Lord's will they were vassals to me.** They bore me tribute. (DB 1.17–19).

*θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: imā dahyāva tyā manā patiyāiša vašnā Auramazdāha manā badakā āhatā. manā bājim abaratā.*

In one isolated instance, the formula is used together with the verb "to live" (*jīv-*), and this is motivated by peculiarities of circumstance. Here, Darius observes: "By the Wise Lord's will, my father, Hystaspes, and my grandfather, Arsames, were both living when the Wise Lord made me king." (*vašnā Auramazdāha hya manā pitā Vištāspa utā Aršāma hya manā niyāka tyā ubā ajīvatam yadiy Auramazdā mam Xšyam akunauš*, DSf 12–15). More than an actuarial peculiarity, the fact that his father and father's father survived to see Darius take the throne was a potentially distressing anomaly within a system of dynastic descent, for ordinarily one became king only upon the death of one's royal father. Since neither Hystaspes nor Arsames had ever ruled the empire, they did not have to die for Darius to accede (this honor fell to the hapless Gau-

<sup>12</sup> With a very few exceptions (DB 5.22, DNa 41–42), only two subjects govern the verb *bar-*. Both have their own characteristic objects that they convey to the same ultimate recipient. Thus, the provinces (*dahyāva*) bear tribute (*bājim*) to the king (DB 1.19, DPe 9–10, DSe 18, DNa 19–20, XPh 17), while the Wise Lord bears him support (*upastām*, AmH 10f, DB 1.25, 1.55, 1.87f, 1.94, 2.24f, 2.34f, 2.40, 2.45, 2.54, 2.60, 2.68, 2.86, 2.96f, 3.6, 3.16f, 3.37, 3.44f, 3.61f, 3.66f, 3.87, 4.60f, 4.62, DNa 50f, DSf 19, DPd 13f, DSk 5, XPh 32f, 45) and grants (*fra-bar-*) him the realm (*xšačam*, AmH 7, AsH 9, DB 1.12, 1.25, 1.60f, DPd 3f, 7f, DPh 8, DNa 33, DSf 11, DSm 3, DSp 2, DSs 6, DZc 4, DH 7, A<sup>2</sup>Hc 18f, 20). These texts thus locate the king at that point where two processes of transmission converge, both of which are necessary to sustain him, albeit in unequal measure: tribute from below and legitimacy from above. The same ideology finds visual representation in the Persepolis reliefs, on which see Margaret Cool Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art* (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1979). For a consideration of the Indo-Iranian background to some of these locutions, see Rüdiger Schmitt, *Nugae Bagistanenses*, *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 30 (1972), pp. 139–154, esp. 142.

mata), but their continued existence afforded tangible evidence of the origins which made Darius's claim to rule more than mildly irregular. Potential for embarrassment was kept to a minimum, however, and the situation turned to advantage by defining this anomaly as a product of "the Wise Lord's will," and constituting it as further proof of Darius's divine election.

#### b) *Verbs of having and getting*

If the verb *bav-* was used with reference to the originary moment of the speaker's royal identity, while *ah-* served to mark the continuation of that identity in the moment of enunciation, a similar distribution is apparent with regard to verbs of possession.

Thus, the verb *grab-* "to grasp, seize, take captive" is used for initial acts of conquest and imperial annexation. Only Darius uses it, and thrice he does so in connection with the formulaic invocation of divine will, thereby legitimating the actions so denoted.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in two occurrences he makes the grand claim, "By the Wise Lord's will these are the lands that I seized" (*vašnā Auramazdāhā imā dahyāva tyā adam agarbāyam*, DNa 16-17 = DSe 15-16), followed by a list of all provinces in the empire. The third (DB 2.2-4) singles out the conquest of Babylon.

In contrast, the verb *dar-* "to hold", describes a situation of secure and continuing control. Here, the inscription attributed to Arsamēs is of interest, insofar as *dar-* there occurs with a singular object: "By the Wise Lord's will, I hold **this land**" (*vašnā Auramazdāhā imām dahyāum dārayāmiy*, AsH 10-11). In this fashion, the claim was advanced – well after the fact – that Darius's grandfather had been a king of sorts, albeit over a single province. Darius himself, however, as king of kings always used *dar-* with a plural or a collective object: "these lands" (*imā dahyāva*, DPe 7) or "this realm" (*ima xšaça*, DB 1.26). The latter passage is particularly instructive for the way it describes the consolidation of imperial power. First, by virtue of the Wise Lord's support (*upastā-* "help, support, assistance"), Darius gains control over the realm. A

<sup>13</sup> Both *grab-* and *dā-* denote acts of seizure involving the use of force. The latter verb (on which, see further note 10 above) is more disreputable, however, for it also implies the use of stealth.

hapax legomenon signals this phase of operations by compounding the verb *dar-* with the preverb *ham-*.<sup>14</sup> Only in the second phase does the uncompounded verb appear, together with the assertion that the king holds the realm "by the Wise Lord's will".

Says Darius the King: The Wise Lord bestowed this realm on me. The Wise Lord bore me help until I held fast (*hamadārayaiy*) this realm. **By the Wise Lord's will I hold** (*dārayamiy*) **this realm**. (DB 1.24-26).

*θātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: Auramazdā maiy ima xšaça frābara. Auramazdāmai upastām abara yātā ima xšaça hamadārayaiy. vašnā Auramazdāhā ima xšaça dārayamiy.*

#### c) *Verbs of violence and destruction*

The verb *grab-* thus indexes the violence through which Achaemenian rule was initially imposed, while *dar-* does similar service for the implicit threat of violence through which that rule was thereafter maintained. The verb that Darius uses most commonly of all in connection with the formula *vašnā Auramazdāhā* (18 of 36 occurrences, 50%) is *jan-* "to strike, smite, defeat." All of these are found in the Bisitun inscription, and refer to the military actions of 522-521 B.C.E., in which he put down rebellions throughout the empire.

Some of these rebellions (particularly those of non-Iranian provinces) involved an attempt to break free of Persian domination and restore native rule; others were attempts to replace Darius with another ruler. In either case, Darius portrayed insurgents as motivated by "the Lie" (*drauga-*; cf. Avestan *druj-*, Vedic *drúh-*), a phrase that in Old Persian, as Bo Utas observed, "is a sharply cut symbol with traits of ethical religion as well as 'Realpolitik'."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Darius wished his victories to be understood in theological terms. In describing them, he regularly asserted: "The Wise Lord bore me help" (*Auramazdāmai upastām abara*), after which one of several variants follows. When Darius commanded the troops himself, he uses a first person form to state "By the Wise Lord's will

<sup>14</sup> See Schmitt, *Nugae Bagistanenses*, pp. 139-142.

<sup>15</sup> Bo Utas, *Old Persian Miscellanies*, *Orientalia Suecana* 14-15 (1966), pp. 129-137, esp. p. 132; see also Gilbert Lazard, "Notes de vieux-perse", *BSL* 71 (1976), pp. 178-180.

I smote that army" (*Auramazdāmaiy upastām abara. vašnā Auramazdāha kāram tyam ... adam ajanam*, DB 1.94–95, 2.68–69; cf. XPh 32–34). When speaking of campaigns in which he was absent from the field of battle, Darius uses third person forms of the verb, but still manages the discourse so as to reserve primary credit for himself. Thus, the description of each victory is preceded by a passage in which Darius appoints as commander a man whom he emphatically identifies as "my subject" (*manā badaka*).<sup>16</sup> In most instances, however, this person disappears when the narrative reaches its formulaic conclusion, at which point Darius, his army and his god once more dominate the action.

The Wise Lord bore me help. By the Wise Lord's will, the army that is mine smote the army that was rebellious. (DB 2.24–26, 2.34–36, 2.39–41, 2.45–46, 2.54–55, 2.60–61, 2.86–87, 3.16–18, 3.61–63 and 3.66–68; cf. DB 3.37–39 and 3.44–46).

*Auramazdāmaiy upastām abara. vašnā Auramazdāha kāra hya manā avam kāram tyam hamiçyam aja.*

On three occasions only does Darius deign to mention the commander by name when he recounts the victory, and twice this is his father (DB 2.96–98 and 3.6–7; cf. DB 3.87–88).

Reflecting the shift from the period of imperial conquest to that of secure domination, the verb *jan-* is used much less frequently in the inscriptions of Darius's successors, and only once does it appear with the formula invoking "the Wise Lord's will." Here, Xerxes describes the lone rebellion he had to suppress upon assuming royal office, and in the sentence that follows, he uses the formula to legitimate another sort of violent act, using the verb *vi-kan-*. Not only is the physical nature of this violence different, but also its goal, for through this act of demolition, Xerxes sought to consolidate religious, as well as military control.

When I became king, there was among the provinces inscribed above, one that was in commotion, Then the Wise Lord bore me help. **By the Wise Lord's will, I smote that province** and sat on its throne. And among these provinces there was one where formerly

<sup>16</sup> Thus DB 2.18–20, 2.29–30, 2.49–50, 2.81–83, 3.13–14, 3.29–32, 3.84–85.

daivas<sup>17</sup> were worshipped. Then, **by the Wise Lord's will, I demolished that daiva-temple.** (XPh 32–38).

*yaθā tya adam xšāyaθiya abavam astiy atar aitā dahyāva tyaīy upariy nipišta ayauda pasāvamaīy Auramazdā upastām abara. vašnā Auramazdahā ava dahyāvam adam ajanam. utašim gāθavā nīšādayam utā atar aitā dahyāva āha yadātya paruvam daivā ayadiya pasāva vašnā Auramazdahā adam avam daivadānam viyakanam.*

#### d) Verbs of doing and meaning

The verb *kar-* "to do, to make, to build" is often used in an unrestricted fashion for accomplishments in a general sense. Conjoined with the phrase *vašnā Auramazdāha*, it advances the blanket claim that all the king's deeds have been divinely authorized or inspired, as in the statement: "By the Wise Lord's will, all I did was good" (*vašnā AMha visam naibam akunavam* (DSi 4)). Only past tenses are used: nine times the first person singular imperfect (DB 1.68, 4.40–41, 4.59–60, DNa 48–50, DNb 47–49, DSa 4–5, DSe 34–35, DSi 4, XPh 43–45), and twice formations from the past passive participle (DB 4.46–47 and 4.52). At sites other than Susa, Darius usually uses this verb in unrestricted fashion (seven of ten occurrences, 70%);<sup>18</sup> thereafter only Xerxes uses it thus in connection with the formula, and he once only (XPh 43–45).

At Susa, however, where Darius built his administrative capital in the period between 518 and 512 B.C.E.,<sup>19</sup> *kar-* has its unrestricted

<sup>17</sup> In most Iranian sources, \**daiva* (OPers. *daiva-*, Av. *daēva-*, MPers. *dēw*) marks a demon or anti-god, but as Émile Benveniste demonstrated (*Hommes et dieux dans l'Avesta*, in: *Festschrift für Wilhelm Eilers*, Wiesbaden [Otto Harrassowitz 1967], pp. 144–147), a few formulaic phrases in the Gathas indicate that the term originally referred to gods, as do its extra-Iranian cognates (Skt. *devá-*, Lt. *deus*, etc.). The question remains open whether Xerxes referred to the same specific beings by this term as did Zarathustra, or if he simply used it for any deities whose worship he found offensive and wished to suppress. The fullest discussion is that of Ugo Bianchi, *L'inscription «des daivas» et le zoroastrisme des Achéménides*, *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 192 (1977), pp. 3–30.

<sup>18</sup> The exceptions are DB 4.88–89 (where the action in question is carving an inscription), and DB 5.16–17 = DB 5.32–33 (punishing those who fail to worship the Wise Lord).

<sup>19</sup> The site seems to have been selected in 521 or shortly thereafter. On Susa and its



sense just once (DSi 4), and six times it is used in restricted fashion with specific reference to construction of the palace (DSa 4–5, DSd 3, DSf 20–22, DSo 3–4, DSj 5–6, DSz 11–12).<sup>20</sup> All the later Achaemenians adopt this latter usage (91% of the time for Xerxes [10/11], 100% for all others: Artaxerxes [1/1], Darius II [1/1], and Artaxerxes II [3/3]). Verbal forms are always in past tenses (to mark projects that have been completed) and most often in the first person singular (XPa 11–13, XPb 25–27, XPd 16–17, XPg 7–12, A<sup>1</sup>Pa 18–22, D<sup>2</sup>Sb 3–4, A<sup>2</sup>Sd 3, and A<sup>2</sup>Sa 4 = A<sup>2</sup>Ha 5–6). Among the few exceptions are those inscriptions where Xerxes honors the accomplishments of his father, using the third person singular (XPc 10–11, XSa 1–2, XPg 2–6, XV 18–20) or when he speaks of projects to which they both contributed, with the first person plural (XPa 15–17, XPf 40–43).

A major shift in the practices and ideology of empire is thus evident. Thus, at the moment that is evident in the Bisitun inscription, the formula “by the Wise Lord’s will” (*vašnā Auramazdāha*) was used in connection with a set of verbs that describe Darius’s irregular seizure of state power and his use of force against unruly subjects. At a later period in his rule, however, and in the inscriptions of his successors, it more frequently occurs with verbs that bespeak the consolidation of power and construction of the administrative and ceremonial centers of Achaemenian rule.<sup>21</sup>

importance, see Rémy Bouchard, *Suse et la Susiane à l’époque achéménide: Données archéologiques*, in: H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt, eds., *Achaemenid History IV: Centre and Periphery* (Leiden, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten 1990), pp. 149–175, Muhammad A. Dandamaev and Vladimir G. Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 256–259 and Walther Hinz, *Darius und die Perser, Eine Kulturgeschichte der Achämeniden* (Baden-Baden, Holle Verlag 1976), pp. 177–182.

<sup>20</sup> Two other restricted uses are found: DSe 34–35 (acts of pacification and establishment of law) and DSe 42–45 (restoration of damaged handiwork).

<sup>21</sup> Matthew Stolper has suggested to me that the distinction is more one of genre than of period: “Isn’t it possible – even likely – that the differences in usage between DB and the later texts reflect the difference between political and military narrative and building inscriptions, rather than mere chronological development?” (personal communication 4 May 1994). His point is well taken, but I do not see this as an either/or question. Rather, historical developments make possible the shift from one genre to another, a shift that reflects the processes of which it is a product. Thus, Darius’s military victories permitted him to consolidate his power, and producing the authoritative account of those victories at DB was the final

	Phase I	Phase II
Verbs of being and becoming	<i>bav-</i>	<i>ah-</i>
Verbs of having and getting	<i>grab-</i>	<i>dar-</i>
Verbs of violence and destruction	<i>jan-</i>	<i>vi-kan-</i>
Verbs of doing and making	<i>kar-</i> [unrestricted]	<i>kar-</i> [restricted]

## II

An Avestan cognate exists for the term that marks the Wise Lord’s will: *vasna-*, which appears three times in the Gāthas (Yasna 34.15, 46.19, 50.11) and thrice in the Younger Avesta (Yašt 9.11, 19.19, and Yasna 55.6). Although its use is less formulaic than that of its Old Persian counterpart (esp. the absence of the genitive modifier, OPers. *Auramazdāha*), there are still some regularities worthy of note. Thus, it always appears in the Singular Instrumental case, as is also true in Old Persian. Interestingly, in all Gāthic occurrences, *vasna-* is found in the hymn’s concluding strophe, a placement that seems appropriate to the eschatological context of all these passages. Thus, for example, Yasna 34 ends with Zarathustra’s fervent request of the Wise Lord: “Create an existence that is wondrous and true, by [your] will!” (*fərašəm vašnā haiθyēm dā ahūm*, Y. 34.15c).

Similarly, Yasna 50 ends when Zarathustra calls upon the Wise Lord – identified here as “Creator of existence” (*dātā aghēuš*, Y. 50.11c) – for “the actualization of that which, according to [your] will, is most wondrous” (*haiθyāvarāštəm/hyat vašnā fərašō.təməm*, Y. 50.11d). Indeed, a striking pattern is evident: Wherever *vasna-* appears in the Avesta, one also finds the verb *dā-* (“to create”), the noun *ahu-* (“existence”) and the adjective *fraša-* (“wondrous”).<sup>22</sup>

piece of this project of consolidation. That being accomplished, in the next phase of his reign, he was free to pursue other sorts of projects – particularly those of building – that are described in different sorts of texts.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding the etymology and semantic range of *fraša-*, see Herman Lommel, *Awestische Einzelstudien*, *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 1 (1922), pp. 29–32; H. W. Bailey, *Indo-Iranian Studies*, *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1953), pp. 21–32; idem, *Armeno-Indo-iranica*, *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1956), pp. 100–104; idem, *Zoroastrian Problems in the 9th Century Books*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1971), pp. vii–xvi; Johanna Narten, *Der Yasna Haptanhāiti* (Wiesbaden, Ludwig Reichert 1986), pp. 199–203, and Jean Kellens, *Les textes vieil-avestiques* (Wiesbaden, Ludwig Reichert, 1988–91) 2, p. 270. Note, however, the critical remarks of Ilya Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*



	Vasna	√dā-	ahu	fraša
Y. 34.15	vasnā 15c	dā 15c	ahūm 15c	fərašəm 15c
Y. 46.19	vasnā 19b		parāhūm 19c	fərašōtəməm 19b
Y. 50.11	vasnā 11d	dātā 11c	aḡhəuš 11c	fərašōtəməm 11d
Y. 55.6	vasna	dāta	aḡhəuš	fərašəm
		daθāna	ahūm	
			ahūm	fərašəm
Yt. 19.11	vasna	daθaite	aḡhəuš	fərašəm
Yt. 19.19	vasna	daθən	ahūm	fərašəm

To make (*kar-*) or create (*dā-*) an existence that is wondrous in this sense is no mean feat. Within the Zoroastrian tradition, these terms describe the dramatic acts that bring history to an end: the final defeat of the Evil Spirit and the Lie, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgement, and the restoration of the Wise Lord's creation to its original, pristine and perfect state.<sup>23</sup> Yašt 19.11 describes a portion of this drama.

When they make existence wondrous,  
Unaging, undying,  
Undecaying, unputrefying,  
Ever-living, ever-thriving, independent;  
When the dead arise,  
Indestructability comes to the living.  
By [your] will, existence is made wondrous.

*yat kərənavəḡ frašəm ahūm*  
*azarəšəntəm amarəšəntəm*  
*afriθyantəm apuyantəm*  
*yavaējim yavaēsum vasō.xšaθrəm*  
*yat irista paiti usəhištən*

(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1959), p. 224n. The attempt of Stanley Insler, *The Gathas of Zarathustra* (Leiden, E. J. Brill 1975), p. 172, to derive *fraša-* from *fra-ar-* is impossible, for then one would expect Old Persian \**frārtā-*.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, the discussions of Herman Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras nach dem Awesta dargestellt* (Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr 1930), pp. 224–225; Marijan Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France 1963), pp. 172–175, and Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer 1965), p. 88. The best Avestan descriptions are found at Yasna 30.7–9 and Yašt 19.10–11, and such Pahlavi sources as *Greater Bundahišn* 34 provide more extended discussions.

*jasāt jvayō amərəxtiš*  
*daθaite frašəm vasna aḡhəuš.*

The plural verb in the first line of this stanza (*yat kərənavəḡ frašəm ahūm*, “When they make existence wondrous”) signals the belief that righteous human beings, through their “good thoughts, good words, and good deeds” can help perfect the world, and thereby contribute to the work of cosmic renewal. In a passage underscoring the value of certain prayers, the same point is made.

We offer praise songs worthy of sacrifice, which were created at the beginning of existence, recalled, performed, learned, thought, preserved, sought, recollected, remembered, offered, and that, according to [your] will, make existence wondrous. (Yasna 55.6)

*staota yesnya yazamaide yā dātā aḡhəuš paouruyehyā marəmnā*  
*vərəzimna saxšəmna sācayamna dadrāna paitišāna paitišmarəmnā*  
*framəmnā frā yazəmna frašəm vasna ahūm daθāna.*

The contrast with Old Persian usage is striking.<sup>24</sup> First, whereas the Achaemenian inscriptions constantly and emphatically speak of God's will, the much larger Avestan corpus does so on relatively few occasions. Second, where the actions legitimated in this fashion by the inscriptions are military, political, and engineering accomplishments of the immediate past, those in the Avesta are either acts yet to come, or those religious and ethical observances in the present that speed the coming of the end-time. Third, where the chief actors in the inscriptions are the king and his army, the Avestan focuses on the Wise Lord and those righteous humans who will be his helpers (*saošyant-*). The discrepancies between these two patterns of usage can be reconciled, however, and in so doing one gains heightened appreciation not only for the skill, but also for the audacity with which Achaemenian rulers combined religious and political discourse.

<sup>24</sup> Some scholars understand the contrast as one between secular Old Persian usage and religious Avestan, e.g., Gnoli, *Politique religieuse sous les Achéménides*, p. 176 and n. 326 or Narten, *Der Yasna Haptanhāiti*, p. 201, but this seems to me mistaken, for the reasons spelled out below. Preferable is the view of Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie*, pp. 35–36.



## III

To this end, we ought consider the Old Persian neuter substantive *fraša-* (Akkadian *būnu*; Elamite transliterates: *pír-ra-šá-um*) “wonder,” more specifically, “something luxuriant, abundant, vigorous; filled with vital force”.<sup>25</sup> The term appears nine times, most often as the object of the verbs *kar-* and *dā-*, but also with several others: *ah-* (“to be”), *θa<sup>a</sup>d-* (“to seem”), and *fra-mā-* (“to measure out”). Two occurrences are set within cosmogonic accounts, where it is told how the Wise Lord “made” a *fraša* as part (or all?) of his work of creation.<sup>26</sup>

A great god is the Wise Lord, who makes a wonder on this earth, who makes mankind on this earth, who makes happiness for mankind, who makes good horses and good chariots. These he bestowed on me. May the Wise Lord protect me and that which is made by me. (DSs; cf. DNb 1–7).

*baga vazraka Auramazdā hya frašam ahyāyā būmiyā kunautiy. hya martiyam ahyāyā būmiyā kunautiy. hya šiyātim kunautiy martiyahyā. hya uvaspā uraθacā kunautiy. manā haudiš frābara. mām Auramazdā pātuv utā tyamaiy kartam.*

Some serious ideological work is accomplished in this brief passage. First, its narrative falls into two sections. In the first, the Wise Lord creates (the verb is *dā-*) a wondrous world, filled with people, animals, and wellbeing. Then, long after the work of creation is complete, he bestows (*fra-bar-*) it all upon the author of the text: Darius the King, elsewhere called “King of Kings,” (*xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyā-nām*) “King of Lands,” (*xšāyaθiya dahyūnām*) and “Great King” (*xšāyaθiya vazraka*). This last title is particularly significant, for the cosmogonic text opens with the assertion “A great god is the Wise Lord” (*baga vazraka Auramazdā*), and – as Clarisse Herrenschildt

<sup>25</sup> For etymological discussions, see the literature cited in note 22 above. The fact that scribes had recourse to transliteration in Elamite indicates that no equivalent term was available in that language. Use of Akkadian *būnu* is so puzzling that the Assyrian Dictionary 2, pp. 320–322 suggests the existence of multiple homonymous *būnus*, one of which – quite badly attested elsewhere – translates *fraša-* in the inscriptions and means “good thing”.

<sup>26</sup> Particularly helpful is the discussion of Clarisse Herrenschildt, *Les créations d’Ahuramazda*, *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977), pp. 17–58.

shrewdly observed – the term “great” (*vazraka*) designates that which stands at the apex of a hierarchic structure, and is applied to two actors only: the Wise Lord and the king.<sup>27</sup> Further, the text begins by using the verb *kar-* to describe the Wise Lord’s act of creation (*hya frašam ahyā yā būmiyā kunautiy*), and ends with Darius’s request for divine protection of the things he has made, using the past passive participle of the same verb to name them (*mām Auramazdā pātuv utā tyamaiy kartam*): The king, like the god, is thereby established as a creator.

Like the Wise Lord, the Achaemenian king is also capable of creating a “wonder,” as all the other occurrences of *fraša-* in Old Persian demonstrate.

Says Darius the King: By the Wise Lord’s will I did that which I did. May it appear a wonder to all.

*θātiy Dārayavauš XŠ: vašnā AMha adam ava akunavam tya akunavam. visahyā frašam θadayātaiy.* (DSa 3–5).

Says Darius the King: By the Wise Lord’s will, may this palace – which was built by me – appear a wonder to all who may see it. May the Wise Lord protect me and my land.

*θātiy Dārayavauš XŠ: vašnā AMhā hya ima hadiš vainātiy tya manā kartam visahyā frašam θadayā taiy. mām am pātuv utamaiy DHum.* (DSj 4–6).

Says Darius the King: By the Wise Lord’s will, I made here at Susa a wonder.

*θātiy Darayavauš XŠ: vašnā AMha čūšāyā idā frašam akunavam.* (DSO 2–4).

Says Darius the King: By the Wise Lord’s will, a great wonder was measured out a Susa. A great wonder was made. May the Wise Lord protect me and my land.

*θātiy Dārayavauš XŠ: vašnā Auramazdāha čūšāyā paruv frašam framātam. paruv frašam kartam. mām Auramazdā pātuv utamaiy DHum.* (DSz 35–37).

Three observations are important here: First, it is only Darius who dares to claim that he himself has made a “wonder;” Second, he does so only in inscriptions at Susa, where the palace itself is de-

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.



finer as the wonder in question; Third, he consistently states that he was able to accomplish this feat "by the Wise Lord's will" (*vašnā Auramazdāha*). To appreciate why this is so, one has to consider one more text: the longest of the Susa inscriptions, DSf, which opens as follows.

A great god is the Wise Lord, who created this earth, who created that sky, who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king: one king over many, one planner among many. (DSf 1-5; cf. DNa 1-8, DSe 1-7, DE 1-11, XPa 1-6, XPb 1-11, XPd 1-8, XPf 1-8, XPh 1-6, XE 1-11, XV 1-9, XPc 1-5, A<sup>1</sup>Pa 1-8, A<sup>2</sup>Hc 1-7, A<sup>3</sup>Pa 1-8).

*baga vazraka Auramazdā. hya imām būmim adā. hya avam asmānam adā. hya martiyam adā. hya šiyātim adā martiyahyā. hya Dārayavaum Xšyam akunauš. aivam parūnām Xšyam aivam parūnām framātāram.*

Like the cosmogonic passage considered above, this account connects two distinct actions of the same actor, telling how the Wise Lord first created (*dā-*) heaven and earth, humanity and well-being, and later made (*kar-*) Darius king. Two differences in detail between the texts are noteworthy, however. First, this text does not begin with the assertion that the Wise Lord created a "wonder" (*fraša-*), as does DSs. Second, here Darius claims to have been named *framātār*—"planner, organizer, director" by the Wise Lord, a term that most literally means "he who measures out," and refers most concretely to the king's responsibility for large scale construction projects.<sup>28</sup>

This verb recurs within a fuller discussion of the king's responsibilities, in which Darius claims that all he does (*kar-*) and all that he builds (*fra-mā-*) is chartered by, and made successful by the Wise Lord.

<sup>28</sup> The agent noun *framātār* occurs only in formulaic cosmogony accounts of the type cited above (DSf 5, DNa 7, etc.). Verbal forms occur three times. Two of these are found in DSf and will be discussed shortly; the third is particularly revealing, for the way it differentiates the planning (*fra-mā-*) and execution (*kar-*) of building projects.

Says Xerxes the great king: By the Wise Lord's will, Darius the king, who was my father, **built and measured out** much that was good. (XPg 1-7)

*θatīy Xšayārsā xšāyaθiya vazraka: vašnā Auramazdāha vasiy tya naibam akunauš utā frāmāyatā Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya hya manā pitā.*

This was the desire of the Wise Lord: In all the earth, he chose me as [his] man. He made me king of all the earth. I sacrificed to the Wise Lord.<sup>29</sup> The Wise Lord bore me help. That which was measured out by me, that he made successful for me. All that I did, I did by the Wise Lord's will. (DSf 15-22).

*Auramazdām avaθā kāma āha. haruvahyāyā BUyā martiyam mām avarnavatā. mām Xšyam akunauš haruvahāyā BUyā. adam auramazdām ayadaiy. Auramazdāmai y upastām abara. tyamai y framātām cartanai y ava ucāramai y akunauš. tya adam akunavam visam vašnā Auramazdāha akunavam.*

In its continuation, this text pursues all the themes announced in this passage, detailing what Darius did and what he "measured out." In contrast to DB, where he catalogued his military victories over various rebels, in DSf he focuses all attention on the magnificent palace he built on this site. He begins by stating, "This palace that I built at Susa: its ornamentation is borne from afar" (*ima hadiš tya gūšāyā akunavam hacāciy dūradaša arjanamšaiy abariya*, DSf 22-23), and he goes on to catalogue the materials and labor that went into it. With regard to the former, he mentions lumber brought (*bar-*) from Lebanon, Gandhara, and Carmania; gold from Sardis and Bactria; gems from Sogdia and Chorasmia; silver and ebony from Egypt; ivory from Ethiopia, Sind, and Arachosia; stone from Elam; and unspecified ornamentation from Ionia (DSf 30-46). He also dwells on the national identity of the workmen: Excavation was done by Babylonians; transport of materials by Assyrians, Carians, and Ionians; stonemasonry by Ionians and Sardians; goldsmithing by Medes and Egyptians; carpentry by Sardians and Egyptians; brickwork by Babylonians; special ornamentation by Medes and Egyptians (DSf 23-34, 47-55).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> On the ways in which Darius used sacrificial ritual to assert the Achaemenian king's position as the sole point of mediation through which human connection to the Wise Lord could be established, see Clarisse Herrenschildt, *Manipulations religieuses de Darius Ier*, in: Marie-Madeleine Mactoux and Evelyne Geny, eds. *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque* (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1988-), pp. 195-207; also Clarisse Herrenschildt and Jean Kellens, *La question du rituel dans le mazdéisme ancien et achéménide*, *Archives de Science sociale des Religions* 85 (1994), pp. 45-67, esp. 56-64.

<sup>30</sup> At Persepolis, similar claims are made, not through inscriptions, but through the iconographic representation of tribute borne to the king and his palace from all



Obviously, so ornate a palace was – and was intended to be – a stunning display of the great king's wealth, but to focus exclusively on this dimension is to read the inscriptions and the edifice alike in a superficial fashion. Equally on display was the size of the empire and the power through which the king extracted such wealth from its provinces. Nor was the palace a simple sign or reflection of this power, for it was also a discursive instrument through which that power was exercised, as the impression it made on Darius's subjects suggested to them the prudence of bowing to his will: a will he consistently misrepresented as the Wise Lord's.

As the material product of the provinces and that apparatus which extracted wealth and labor from them, the palace embodied the empire as a whole, while also housing and announcing the power that created, dominated, and maintained it. It is this complex sign, model, and instrument of imperial domination that Darius claims to have "measured out ... by the Wise Lord's will." And when Darius calls his palace a "wonder" (*fraša-*) in the concluding paragraph of DSf, that term seems to have the same eschatological content as its Avestan cognate, albeit here put to novel purpose. With it, Darius implicitly asserts that in "pacifying" the empire and constructing this palace, he re-established the perfection that existed before creation fell under the influence of the Lie.

Says Darius the King: In Susa a great wonder (*fraša-*) was measured out. A great wonder it was. Protect me, Wise Lord, and Hystaspes, who is my father, and my land. (DSf 55–58).

*θātiy Dārayavauš XŠ: ǰūšāyā paruv frašam framātam. paruv frašam āha. mām Auramazdā pātuv utā Vištāspam hya manā pitā utamaiy DHum.*

#### IV

We may summarize the points made above, which I take to be among the essential pieces of the Achaemenian religio-political ideology that took shape early in the reign of Darius I.

provinces of the empire. See Erich F. Schmidt, *Persepolis: I. Structures, Reliefs, Inscriptions* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1953), and Root, *King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art* (op cit., n. 12).

1. The Wise Lord created this world, and in its original form it was perfect and wondrous (*fraša-*). Later, it fell into disorder, after which he made Darius king.
2. The king, like the Wise Lord, is a creator, and what he creates is the empire.
3. In this project, he is sustained by support borne (*bar-*) to him by the Wise Lord, and he does what he does by the Wise Lord's will (*vašnā Auramazdāha*).
4. Initially, his most significant acts are military victories, as he conquers (*jan-*) the rebels who make evil, disorder, and the Lie manifest in the world.
5. Once that is accomplished, the king turns his creative powers to tasks of construction (*kar-, fra-mā-*).
6. Darius's administrative capital at Susa was a microcosm of the empire, made up of precious materials borne (*bar-*) to him as tribute by the provinces. As the product and representation of the pacified empire, this palace also instantiated his claim to have restored the cosmos to its original, pristine state.<sup>31</sup> This, in the fullest sense, is the "wonder" (*fraša-*) created by the great king.

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<sup>31</sup> Commenting on an earlier version of this paper, Clarisse Herrenschildt raised a series of penetrating questions a propos of this point: "Je ne comprends au fond pas très bien de quoi il s'agit lorsque vous dites: «(Darius claims) to have restored the cosmos to its original, pristine state». S'agit-il d'une rénovation humaine avant la rénovation finale? S'agit-il d'un temps avant la fin des temps? Darius pensait-il le temps clos?" (personal communication, 12 December 1994). I understand Darius to have represented himself as playing a role similar to that which the Avesta assigns the *saošyant*: i.e. someone working to overcome all evil influences operative in the world, thereby helping to secure the renewal and perfection of existence. Moreover, he asserts that he has undertaken this awesome project as nothing less than the Wise Lord's agent, and has always acted in accord with his will and plan. Whether or not Darius himself thought that time and creation had come to an end is not something we can judge with certainty (since we cannot penetrate his subjectivity at this great remove), but it is not vital we do so. More importantly, we can recognize that he – like certain other rulers of great empires – sought to persuade his subjects that within his reign, as a result of his actions, history had come to an end and paradise had been established.